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Community factors affecting long-lasting impregnated mosquito net use for malaria control in Sri Lanka

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The Anti Malaria Campaign distributed approximately 300,000 long-lasting impregnated nets (LLINs) to residents in malaria-endemic areas in Sri Lanka during the years 2005 to 2007. We conducted a community-based cross-sectional survey in the Anuradhapura and Vavuniya districts among 2467 households distributed among the three major ethnic groups of Sri Lanka, to study the perceptions and practices with regard to the use of LLINs in order to improve their use. In a majority of households the number of LLINs available was not sufficient for the number of people, although there were a small percentage of households that had excess nets. The information and advice given at the time of distribution regarding use of the nets differed amongst the three groups and was not consistent. Only around 50% of the population received instructions on washing and drying the net or were told that the net given was a LLIN. Seven percent of the Sinhalese, 16% of Tamils and 6% of Moors indicated that they were advised to wash LLINs once in 6 months, while 40% of the Moors, 2% Sinhalese and 16% Tamils indicated that they were advised to wash it once in 5 years. Advice regarding drying was not received by 85% of the Tamil respondents, with only 9% indicating that they were asked to dry the net in the shade. This percentage was lower than that observed among Sinhalese and Moor respondents (81% and 34% respectively). The manufacturer's instruction for washing Olyset™ LLINs is once in 6 months so as to activate the chemical. Only 51% of Sinhalese, 34% of Tamils and 41% of Moors washed their nets once in 6 months as instructed by the manufacturers. However, the reason for washing the net was because it was dirty and not to activate the chemical. Of those who reported washing the nets, the correct procedure for drying (which is in the shade) was practiced by 92% of Sinhalese and 85% of Moors as compared to 70% of Tamils. It was noted that net shape may influence net use, with cone shaped nets being more popular. Interventions are required to improve practices with regard to LLIN use and will contribute to further reduction of malaria in Sri Lanka.

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